



## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND HAUSA AFFIXATION

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**Abstract:** This study compares the affixation processes involved in English and Hausa language word formation systems, with the aim of identifying areas of differences and similarities for pedagogic implications. The study adopted two theories; “Construction morphology” and “Contrastive Analysis”. In “construction morphology” complex words of a language are analysed as constructions, that is systematic pairings of form and meaning. Words are believed to be built from morphemes either by rules or by constructional schemata and the meanings of complex words are culminations of the meanings of the components of words. While “Contrastive Analysis” deals with differences and similarities between the two languages and hypothesized that similarities between the two languages would facilitate learning (positive transfer’), but differences would due to ‘negative transfer’ (or ‘interference’). The study compares and discusses affixation processes; prefixes, infixes and suffixes in both languages using the descriptive analysis method. The analysis was based on standard dialect of both languages. From the data analysed, it was discovered that in both languages there are significant areas of differences and similarities; similarities aids learning while some of the differences interferes significantly in learning of English as a second language by the Hausa speakers of English language. This research work can be used as a source of information or rather reference material to curriculum planners/designers and reviewers as well as teachers. This is significant in second language teaching and learning as it implies that teachers of English as a second language could use these areas of contrasts and similarities as effective teaching devices to teach and correct interference errors among Hausa learners of English.

**Keywords:** morphology, affixes, construction theory, contrastive analysis, Hausa and English

### 1. Introduction

The major task of a linguist is to describe the properties of a language. This kind of description is generally referred to as the grammar of the language. Although there are some considerable disagreements within linguistics concerning the precise form of a grammar, it is believed that each grammar of a language has the following properties; phonetic property, phonological property, syntactic property, semantic property and lexical or morphological property. The study of how languages are differently structured began out of the interest to classify language families across the world. This was initiated by historical or comparative linguist

whose efforts were geared towards identifying areas of similarities and differences with a view to identifying the ancestral origin of such languages under study. According to Al-Hassan (1998), comparative linguistic approaches apply to all levels of linguistic analysis which include phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Among these levels of analysis, morphology is level accorded lesser attention in comparative linguistics. This research work sets out to study the similarities and differences of affixation processes of two genetically unrelated languages namely (English and Hausa). Genetically, the English and Hausa languages belong to different phyla. English is a European language in the Indo-European sub-division,



whereas Hausa according to Greenberg (1966) is a member of Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic phylum. Generally speaking, irrespective of the genetic unrelatedness of two languages, the languages have certain similarities. The morphological features these languages may share in common may not necessarily be indicative of their genetic or historical relationship but a relationship of universal dimension. It is obvious that universal features or similarities and differences among languages can be discovered with exactitude through comparative/contrastive studies.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Languages of the world have their own affixation processes and the rules governing them, likewise English and Hausa. The Hausa language differs from the English language in affixation processes. This could therefore lead to a linguistic situation of inter-lingual errors emanating from mother tongue interference on the target language. Areas of commonalities could aid learning as proposed in contrastive analysis while areas of differences could inhibit L2 learning. This study seeks to uncover how linguistic elements like affixes, signal grammatical relationship when indicating number, gender or tense marking in the Hausa and English language, and how it is used to derive words in such languages through the use of derivational affixes. Despite the fact that scholarly works have been done on the morphological processes of the English language and other languages, much have not been done on the comparative study between English and Hausa word formation processes of affixation and its implications to language learning. This work aims at filling this gap by comparing the morphological processes of affixation in English and Hausa language with the aim of revealing the cross-linguistic differences and similarities as well as predicting the pedagogical implications it has in learning the target language which is the English Language.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study will be guided by the following objectives

- i. To examine the similarities between English and Hausa language morphological processes of affixation.
- ii. To examine the differences that exists between English and Hausa language morphological processes of affixation.
- iii. To determine how the similarities in the affixation processes affect the learning of the English language by the Hausa speaker.
- iv. To determine how the differences in the affixation processes influence the learning of the English Language by the Hausa speaker.
- v. To also examine the pedagogical implications of these cross-linguistic differences between Hausa and English morphological processes to the teaching and learning of the English Language affixation

### 1.3 Explanation of Key Words and Phrases

Morphology as an aspect of linguistic analysis has a lot of definitions from various scholars. Yule (2010) defined Morphology as the study of basic form of language. Tomori (1999) also defined morphology as the study of the structure of word. This implies that morphology as a field of linguistics sets out to study the rules governing the formation of words in a language and the internal structure of words. In my view, given various definitions earlier stated Tomori's definition seeks to capture the essence of this research work, because it covers the structure of words, the formation of word and the rules governing such formations.

#### 1.3.1 Word, Morphemes and Classification of Morphemes

**Word:** a word is the basic unit of language. Languages have some elements ranging from the wordsto discourses. A word is the basic element upon which discourse is built. Carstairs (2002) stated that words as meaningful building blocks of language. This implies that words are meaningful linguistic forms which combines together to form a larger complex meaning. Plag(2003) posits that words are composed by putting together smaller elements to form larger words



with more complex meaning can be referred to as morphologically complex words.

**Morphemes:** they are smallest meaningful unit of morphology which contribute in shaping of words. Morpheme can be classified into free morpheme and bound morpheme. Grady and Guzman (1996) was the view that, a morpheme that can stand on its own is called free morpheme while a morpheme that must be attached to another element is a bound morpheme.” Bound morpheme must be joined with another morphemes as part of words and can never stand alone. For instance: prefixes “en” + large = enlarge.

**Root:** root is the morpheme which carries the core meaning. In the word “faithfulness” for instance, the core of the word or root morpheme is faith. The root of the word is that part that is always present.

**Stem:** it is that part of a word that exist before any inflectional affixes (Katamba 1993). For instance, in the word “driver” before inflection of “s” is a stem.

**Base:** “a base is any unit whatsoever to which affixes of any kind can be added” (Katamba, 1993: 45). For instance, in the word ‘Disagreement’, the root is “agree” and at the same time the base. We can conclude that all roots are base but roots are stems when they take inflectional suffixes. Although all roots are bases, not all roots are stems.

language does not exhibit inflectional suffixation, rather inflections are actualizing by prefixing morphemes to forms; ‘Enekele - Man’ ‘Ab ’ekele – men’ ‘Akpiti-ant’ Am ’kpiti –ants’ ‘Ewo – goat Am ’ewo – goats’ ‘imoto – youth Ab’ imoto- infants’ etc.

## 2. Empirical Studies

Abubakre (2008) studied morphological processes of affixation in Hausa and Eggon language with a view of describing and analyzing the differences and similarities in the cross-linguistic morphological realization in the two languages. He chose two genetically different languages to justify the fact that some of the universal properties of natural language do vary from language to language irrespective of their genetic relationship. Hausa, being a member of Chadic

sub-group of Afro-Asiatic language family while Eggon being classified as a Benue-Congo language family. The findings of the study had revealed among other things that affixation in Hausa and Eggon, whether derivational or inflectional perform a productive role in the lexicons of the languages. David (1985) carried out a study on contrastive analysis of Tiv and English morphological processes. He examined the inflectional patterns evident in Tiv and contrasted it with English language with a view to detecting their similarities and differences. The research findings revealed cross linguistic differences in the morphemic distribution of the languages are likely to influence teaching and learning of English by the native speaker of Tiv language. It also revealed that there is set of Tiv morpheme that marks gender and tense which also obtains in the English language. Affixes in Tiv language are only placed at the level of suffixation and infixation. Andrew (2006) conducted a study on a comparative analysis of English and Igala morphological process. The findings of his research revealed that Igala and the English language share some universal morphological properties. It also revealed that there are areas of differences in the type of morphological processes applicable in both languages e.g.

### 2.1 Inflectional suffixes

English: fight, fights, fighting, fought

Igala: J, Ja, Ja, Ja

English makes use of inflections and vowel to express grammatical notions of tense in its verbal class while Igala actualizes tense marking by attaching the tense morphological marker on lexical items or pre-verbal elements to express tense. Therefore, it can say that Igala verbs are not morphosyntactic and does not mostly show morphemic variations and syntactic function with regards to the indication of tense, case, and number (Andrew 2006) e.g.

### 2.2 Affixation in English

Affixation, according to crystal (1980) can be defined as a morphological process whereby grammatical or



lexical information is added to a stem. This work adopts crystal's definition based on the fact that it is more explicit than others, since it covers a wider linguistic range. In summary we can say that affixation is a process in which a new additive is added to an operand (root) to create new word. Processes of affixation in English as Mathews (1991) and Agezi (2004) posits it, may be classified into prefixes, suffixes and infixes processes, depending on whether the affix is added before the base, after it or at some determined point within it. The primary function of prefix in English is to change the meaning of the base to which it is added.

Suffixes are attached to the end of free morphemes; thus they are bound morphemes attached to the end of the bases. In English, suffixes frequently alter the word-class of the base. Haspelmath (2002) practically demonstrates that inflectional suffixes are of two types: derivational and inflectional suffixes. In English, suffixation is primarily class – changing, that is suffixes generally alter the word– class of the base. (Thakur, 1997:26)

The last form of affixation is in-fixation, which has to do with insertion between the root (word) or operand. Usually a morpheme is inserted in between the root or base for in-fixation. Thus, it is a process where an affix interrupts the root. The process of infixation, according to Crystal (1980) does not occur in European languages which English is one of them; but can be commonly found among Asian, American, Indian and African languages.

Affixation in Hausa is called “dafi”, that is a process whereby a morpheme is added to the root to add meaning to it or to give it another meaning. The affix which is attached to the initial word or position is called

**Table 1**

Operand	+Suffixes	Derived	Gloss
Bako (guest)	+ nta	<b>Bakunta</b>	Being guest
Gona (farm)	+ kai	<b>Gonakai</b>	Farms
Dangi (family)	+ ntaka	<b>Dangantaka</b>	Relationship
Sabo (new)	+ untaka	<b>Sabuntaka</b>	Newness
Taburma (mat)	+ mai	<b>Taburmai</b>	Mats

Abdullhamid (2000)

“dafagoshi” (prefixation) while the one attached at the final position of the word is called “dafa – keya”(suffixation). The one which is attached at the middle of the root word is called “Dafa – ciki”(infixation). The processes of affixation in Hausa involves prefixation (dafa – goshi), suffixation (dafa – keya) and infixation (dafa – ciki).

### 2.3 Prefixation (Daafa – Goshi) in Hausa

According to Abdullhamid (2000) prefix in Hausa make use of derivational morpheme as prefixes that are used in patronymics or ethnonyms. This involves the processes of affixation where a morpheme (known as Kwayar tasarifi) in Hausa comes before the root word. There are four prefixes in Hausa that are illustrated here: They are “–ba,” – “ma,” “mai,” and “maras”,

Examples (1)**BA** as a prefix in Hausa has the idea of “man of” e.g, **Ba**-hagu (**Bahago**) = left- handed , **Ba**-turai (**Baturee**)=European etc. Example (2i) **Ma**-as a prefix in Hausa has idea of “doer of”, eg. **Ma**-harbi (**maharbi**)=shooter as in hunting, **Ma**-taimako=help (**mataimaki**)=helper

Example (3) **Mai** indicates profession), **Mai**-dinki = suit (**maidinki**)=tailor. (4) “Maras” indicates lack of or less e.g **Maras**-kunya = shy (**maraskunya**)= shyless

### 2.4 Suffixation (Dafa – Keya) in Hausa

According to Abdullhamid (2000), suffixation plays a major role in Hausa morphology and has the largest number of inflectional as well as derivational morphemes compared to pre-fixation and in-fixation. This kind of morpheme (kwayar tasarifi) allows the root to appear before it. These suffixes include –nta, - kai, - ta – wa, - ku etc. Abdullhamid(2000) gave examples of Hausa language suffixation as follows:



### 2.5 Infixation (Dafa – Ciki) in Hausa

The morpheme that is inserted within the root is referred to as an infix. Fagge (2004:7) posits that; “when a morpheme comes between elements of the root is called an infix”. Examples of in-fixation can be seen in Hausa language, but they are not common in English language because English does not have true in-fixation.

Although the native Hausa speakers uses the term infixes in Hausa. The following pairs of words show how infixes are used in Hausa language. There are types of vocalic morpheme which appear in the middle of words. These include – a -, - e -, and – i -. The first short vowels “- a-” and “-e-” are inflectional vowels while “-i-” is derivational vowel. Abdullhamid (2000) gave the following examples as:

Table 2

Operand	+ suffixes	Derived	Gloss
Gurgu	-aa -	Gur <u>aa</u> gu	Lame
Murhu	-aa-	Mara <u>aa</u> hu	Local stoves
Kurma	-a-	Kur <u>a</u> me	Deaf
Baawaa	-i-	Bai <u>i</u> wa	Slave
Doki	-wa-	Daw <u>u</u> ki	Horses

Abdullhamid (2000)

### 3. Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework for comparative study presents a number of different perspectives. This study adopts two theories that are relevant to this study: Construction morphology and Contrastive Analysis.

#### 3.1 Construction Morphology

Construction Morphology (CM) is a morphological theory developed by Geert Booji in (2000s). Masini (2012) says: “The label Construction Morphology however, appears for the first time in Booji (2005).” The key publication on CM is Baoji’s 2010 book tagged “Construction Morphology”. Masini (2012:1) opined that CM can be viewed as a theory that deals with morphological constructions within the larger framework of Construction Grammar (CG). In construction morphology, complex words are seen as constructions on the word level. The notion ‘construction’ which connotes a pairing of form and meaning as developed in the theory of Construction Grammar is essential for an insightful account of the properties of complex words. Morphological patterns can be represented as constructional schemas that

express generalizations about sets of existing complex words and word forms, and provide the recipes for coining new (forms of) words, (Booji 2017). Construction Morphology is a theory of word structure in which the complex words of a language are analyzed as constructions, that is, systematic pairings of form and meaning. Words are believed to be built from morphemes either by rules or by constructional schemata (Boojij, 2010) and the meanings of complex words are culminations of the meanings of the components of words. Morphological schemas therefore have two functions: they express predictable properties of existing complex words and indicate how new ones can be coined (Jackendoff 1975).

#### 3.2 Contrastive Analysis

The term “contrastive linguistics” was first coined by Whorf (1941) for comparative study. Contrastive linguistics has been perceived as a sub-discipline of linguistics concerned with the comparison of two or more languages or sub-system of languages in order to determine both the differences and similarities between them” (Fisiak, 1986:18). The publication of Robert Lado’s book “linguistics across culture” in 1957



initiated a comparative linguistic study. Contrastive analysis is the method of analyzing the structure of any two languages with a view to identifying the different aspects of their systems, irrespective of their genetic affinity or level of development. It is assumed that learning a second language is facilitated whenever there are similarities between that language and the mother tongue. Learning may be interfered with when there are marked differences or contrast between mother tongue and second language (Nickel, 1971:26). The researcher adopts the two previously mentioned theories “construction morphology” and “Contrastive Analysis” because construction morphology provides theoretical platform for analyzing affixes as a morphological construction where complex words are seen as constructions on the word level. The notion of ‘construction’, as a pairing of form and meaning, as developed in the theory of Construction Grammar is essential for an insightful account of the properties of complex words in both languages. It will provide the theoretical foundation of unravelling how the differences in the affixation processes of the two languages occasion differences in meaning. The relevant of contrastive linguistics to this research work is that, it serves as a veritable tool for contrasting linguistic differences between two languages with a view to predicting inter-lingual errors arising from cross-linguistic differences.

#### 4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive design approach it is aimed at undertaking a comparative study between English and Hausa word formation processes (affixation). Descriptive study is suitable for this study in that it aims at intuitive observations of area of cross-linguistic differences and similarities between the two languages while also making generalization on its implications to the learning of the target language (English). The data for this study were obtained from various sources, which include primary and secondary sources. Furthermore, the native informants known as “kanawa” (kano people) who are the standard dialect speakers used in this study were contacted in order to affirm or discard a point of argument on this study. The data collected were organized in tables describing the nature and type of data collected.

#### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

##### 5.1 Areas of similarities between the affixation processes of the English and the Hausa language

English and Hausa language are similar in the word formation process of pre-fixation. In the two languages (English and Hausa) prefixes are used before the root for derivational morpheme making negation. For examples:

Table 3

OPERAND (English and Hausa)	PREFIXES (English and Hausa )	DERIVED FORM (English and Hausa)	GLOSS
Educated Mai Iliimi (Educated)	-un -maras	Uneducated MarasIlimai	Uneducated
Clever Wayo (cleverness )	-un Maras	Unclever Maraswayo	Unclever

Based on the table above both English and Hausa have derivative before the operand (base) known as prefix which is used to indicate negation, or reverse as “un” for

English and “maras” for Hausa. In this regard, both English and Hausa are similar in pre-fixation process as both languages use the above prefixes to indicate



negation as part of word formation in their respective languages.

Secondly, both languages have similar suffixation process especially for inflectional purposes. This is because they share some similar suffixation in number

marking. That is to say both English and Hausa have similar process of inflectional suffixes. The table below indicates these inflectional suffixes which marks singularity and plurality in the both languages.

Table 4

OPERAND (English and Hausa)	SUFFIX (English and Hausa)	DERIVED FORM (English and Hausa)	GLOSS
Boy	-s	Boys	Plural
Battery	-ies	Batteries	Plural
Hula (Cap)	-Una	Huluna	Caps (plural )

### 5.2 Areas of differences between the affixation processes of the English language and the Hausa language

Despite their similarities, differences exist within the two languages (English and Hausa). Firstly, the major differences observed between English and Hausa are in the pre-fixational classification of the English language. This can be seen from the examples that English language uses different classification of prefixes which Quirk et al (1973: 442) identified as:

#### I. pejorative prefixes

This prefix expresses contempt. In English, there are two prefixes of this kind (Mis+) and (Mal+) as in:

Mis + calculate = miscalculate

Mal + administration = maladministration

In Hausa, you cannot find these pejorative prefixes. Hausa language usages free morpheme such as “kuskure” which refers to (Mis) in order to make such expression.

#### II. Prefixes of degree or size

This kind of prefixes in English indicate grade, size, or extent of something such as super, under and out as in: Super + structure = superstructure, Under + weight = underweight, Out + growt = outgrow. These groups of prefixes are not found in Hausa. Hausa

indicates grade or size by using root word such as “sosai” e.g. “girma sosai” (outgrow).

#### III. Prefixes of attitude

These prefixes indicate the behavior of something or somebody towards another; such as anti, counter and co as in: Anti + criminal = anti criminal, Anti+= anti-corruption, Counter + balance = counterbalance, Co + exist = coexist. Prefixes of attitude do not exist in Hausa. In contrast Hausa uses word such as “masuyaki” (Anti) toward an attitude e.g “masuyaki da cinhanki” (anticorruption).

**IV. Locative prefixes:** indicates the actual setting or position, or mixture of something such as: Trans + form = transform, Trans + figure = transfigure, Inter + link = interlink, etc. This kind of prefix cannot be found in Hausa also. To indicate actual setting or position Hausa uses word like “ingantawa” (transform).

**V. Prefixes of time and order** can be found in English but not Hausa. They are used to indicate time such as: pre, post, and re, as in: Pre + caution = precaution, Post + date = postdate, Re + decoration = redecoration. Hausa uses words not affixes to indicate time and order as in “pre-” (Kafin), “post-” (Bayan)and Re (kara). Examples, Preprimary (Kafin primary), etc.

**Number prefixes** are used in English to indicate quantity such as di, bi, mono, uni, and tri as in: di + syllabic = disyllabic, bi + lingual = bilingual, uni +



lateral = unilateral, tri + color = tricolor. Hausa language in the other hand uses root word such as “Di” (Daya), “Bi” (Biyu), “Tri” (Uku),

Hausa language on the other hand exhibits only four prefixes: **ba**, **ma**, **mai** and **Maras**. Three out of these prefixes excluding “maras” makes Hausa language different from English language in terms of the prefix which marks ownership of particular language or one being a native of particular geographical area. Hausa uses prefix like “ba” as in (Bahaushe) Hausa man,

(Bafaranshe) French man, or someone whose mother tongue is French and also “ma” as in (Makadi) a drummer. Hausa language has these kinds of prefixes which do not exist in English language. Secondly, Hausa language differs from English in term of suffixes which indicate gender. Hausa mark gender variation through the use of suffixes like –inya and even vowel alternation which are all used to indicate gender distinction as in:

**Table 5**

OPERAND	GLOSS	SUFFIX	DERIVED	GLOSS
Yaro	Boy	-inya	Yarinya	Girl
Malami	Male teacher	-a	Malama	Female teacher
Jaki	Donkey (male)	-a	Jaka	Donkey (female)

Thirdly, Hausa can insert additional morph or affixes at some determined point within the operand to indicate plurality as in:

**Table 6**

OPERAND	GLOSS	SUFFIX	DERIVED	GLOSS
Gurgu	Lame	-a	Guragu	Lames
Murhu	Stove	-a	Murahu	Stoves

The table above shows the phenomenon known as “infixes”. Although English can indicate plurality by using inflection, it does not allow the insertion of an element within the operand when indicating number.

### 5.3 The extent to which the similarities in the morphological processes facilitates L2 competence of the Hausa-English speakers

There are linguistic assumptions that linguistic similarities could facilitate language learning. Where two languages are similar there is bound to be positive transfer of linguistic features of the L1 in to the L2, with respect to (English and Hausa) prefixation and suffixation processes the two languages share similar processes. For example:

**Table 7**

OPERAND (English and Hausa )	PREFIXES/SUFFIXES	DERIVED	GLOSS
Clever Wayo (cleverness )	Un Maras	Unclever Maraswayo	Unclever
Civilize Wayewa	UN Maras	Uncivilized Maraswayewa	Uncivilized



The table above shows the extent of similarities which will result in the positive transfer of prefixes and suffixes from the L1 of the Hausa speakers to the L2 learning process of the English language. “In” as in the “Inaccurate”, “Inactive”, indicate negation in similar way with Hausa prefixational marker “maras”. These similar linguistics feature(s) of English and Hausa language served perfectly in applying direct translation method of teaching in order to ease the difficulty of teaching the target language (English).

#### **5.4 The extent to which the differences in the morphological processes of affixation affect L2 competence of the Hausa-English speakers**

Linguistic differences of Hausa and English language with regard to comparative affixes result negative transfer from Hausa language to the English language in the areas of comparative marking system. English language make use of comparative suffixes e.g “er” and “est”, which do not occur in Hausa language. Hausa on the other hand uses prefix “mafi” to indicate comparative marking system.

#### **5.5 pedagogical implications of cross-linguistic differences in the affixation processes of Hausa and English language teaching**

Cross linguistic differences usually have pedagogical implications in the learning of target language. These differences usually trigger inter-lingual errors. With regard to English language teaching, English and Hausa both employed the use of affixation (prefixes) to form new words but Hausa has different affixational rule. This implies the possibility of L1 rule overlap in to the L2 (English) language. Hausa language has prefix “maras” which means (lack of or less) while English language has prefixes such as “IL” and “IR” which has the idea of (lack of or less). In Hausa language the prefix “maras” when attached to the root word such as “sauri” (Hurry) to form “marassauri” (unhurried), Hausa speakers pronounce all the letters regardless of the occurrences of the same letters that appears in the word formation of the derived form. e.g. “Maras-sauri” (unhurried). In contrast to the Hausa language, some

English prefixes such as “IL” and “IR”, when attached to the root word to form another words such as, “Irrelevant” and “Illiterate”, the first letters “L & R” are assimilated into the other thereby pronouncing the second one only. Here, Hausa speakers L1 affixational rule interfere in the learning of English language, resulting in the transfer of the (Hausa) L1 rule in the phonological realization of the English derived words; “illiterate” and “irrelevant” as “Il-literate” and “Ir-relevant” as he does with the Hausa language.

#### **6. Conclusion**

This research work affirms that English and Hausa language have their own peculiarities, but with some common features. Therefore, for Hausa learners of English to be effective in the knowledge of English affixation processes (word formation) he or she should be grounded in the morphology of the target language which to some aspects differs from his or her own Hausa language.

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